

I continue to have profound reservations about our troop commitments in Afghanistan. History suggests that we will not be successful in stabilizing Afghanistan with military force. No one has and I don't think anyone will.

I opposed the tripling of forces in the region and think that a rapid drawdown starting in July is absolutely essential. We should not, however, tie the hands of the administration and put the civilians in Afghanistan at risk by forcing a complete withdrawal of troops in 30 days. The forthcoming reduction in U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan must be significant and sizeable, but must be executed in an orderly fashion.

The reasons for a timely departure are many. Afghanistan today is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, ranked next to last out of 180 by Transparency International. If you have a culture of corruption, it's hard to plant seeds of positive growth. Economic development through roads and water make the difference between people being thug and doing whatever they necessary to feed their families.

The United States and international donors simply cannot afford to bankroll 70% of Afghanistan's budget and to keep spending \$8 billion a month in taxpayer money. We spend in one day 20 times what the average Afghani will earn in an entire year. Yet for all that spending there is a dire need for the most basic of services. In the rural areas, 80% drink polluted water, only 10% have adequate sanitation.

It grows clearer by the day that the more heavy-handed we are and the stronger our military presence in Afghanistan, the more we unify the threats against our troops, the United States, and our allies.

Military efforts do little to address the Afghan people's grievances over their exclusion from the political process and do little for long-term stability throughout the region.

We should focus on civilian efforts, working with Afghans to strengthen their ability to govern, support civil society, fight corruption, and help to rebuild their country. We cannot do this responsibly in 30 days. That's why I oppose this resolution and instead support a significant –

but thoughtful – drawdown in July.